

# THE MOUND BUILDERS

THE GREATEST MONUMENT OF PREHISTORIC MAN



CAHOKIA OR MONKS MOUND



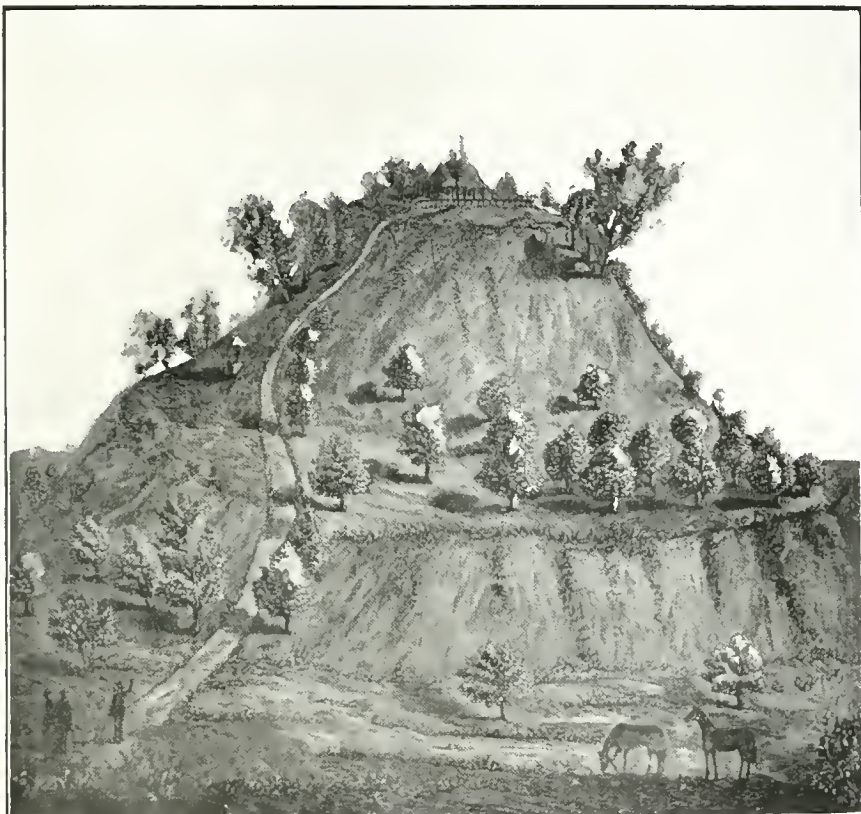
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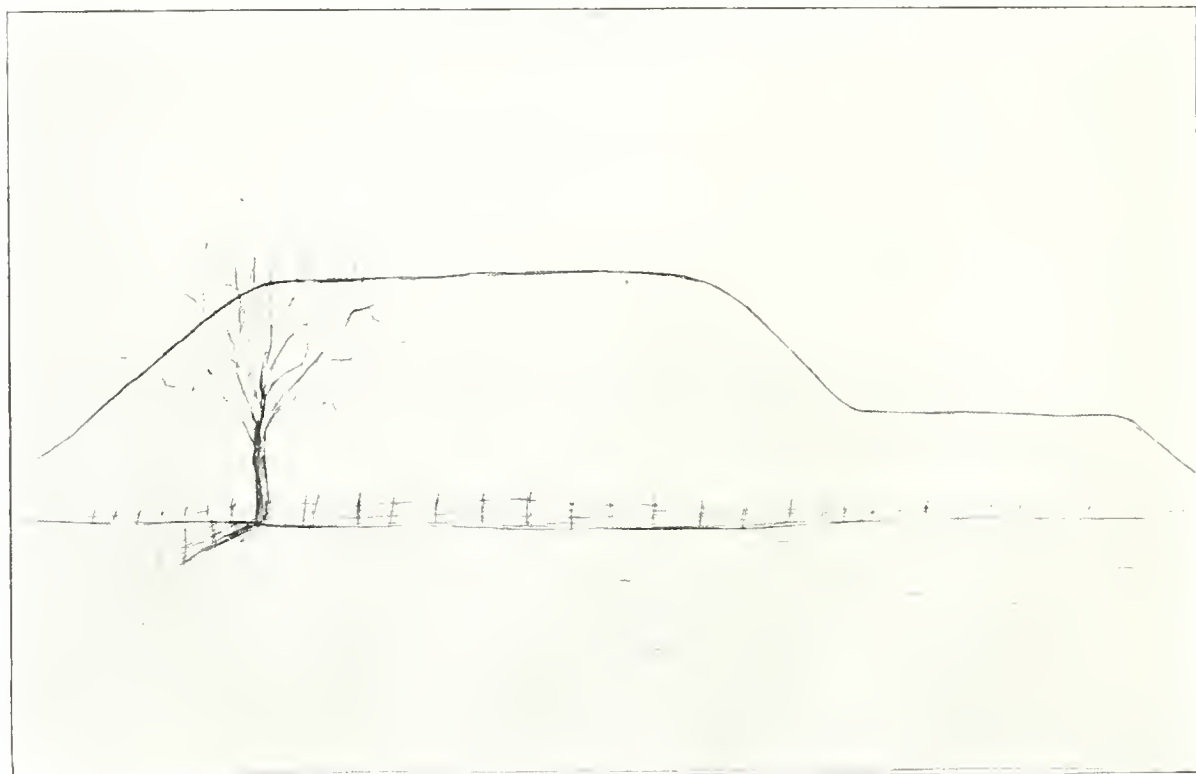


CAHOKIA OR "MONK'S MOUND," MADISON CO., ILL.



**Y**OUR attention is respectfully directed to the following extracts from a few of the many scientists who have visited the great Cahokia Mound within the last century, showing you that everyone who visits it recognizes its prehistoric value.





# CAHOKIA MOUND PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

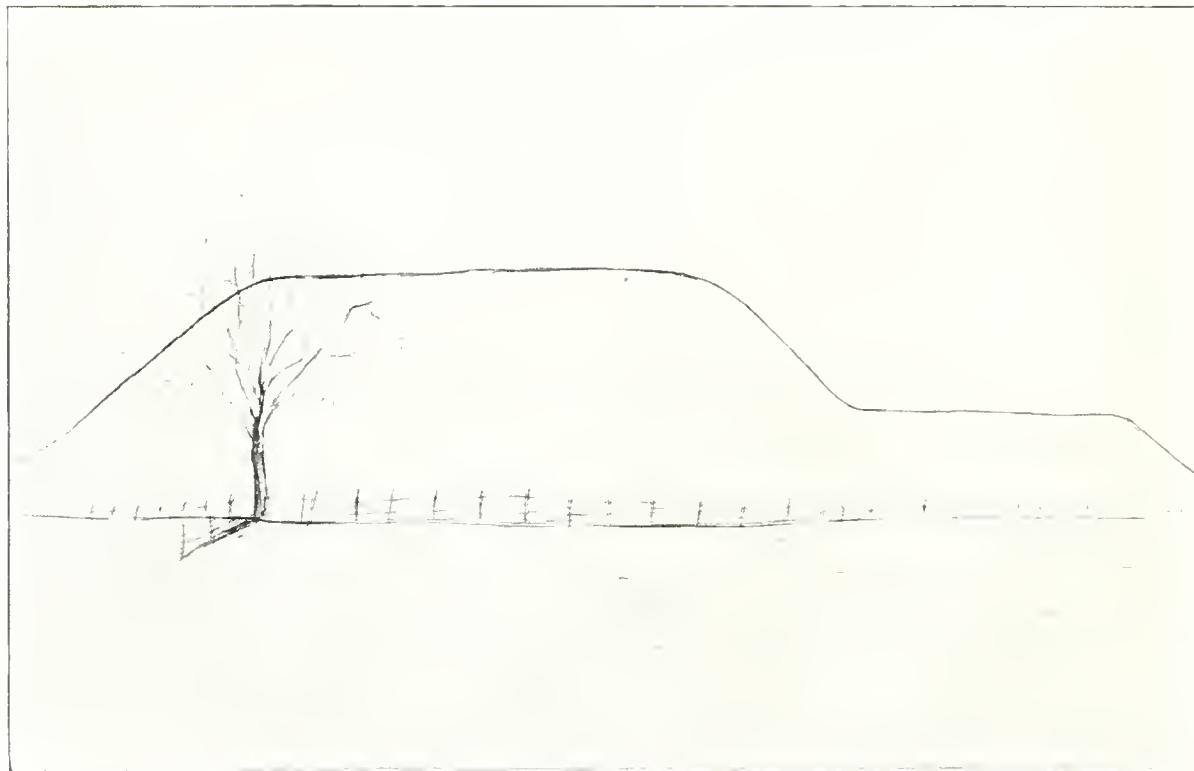
## EDWARDSVILLE, ILLINOIS

Dear Sir:

Your attention is respectfully directed to a movement on foot in Illinois at the present time to conserve one of the greatest wonders of prehistoric time--the famous Monks Mound of the American Bottom. On Wednesday, March 12, a bill for this purpose was introduced in the lower house of the Illinois General Assembly by Norman G. Flagg, of Moro, member from the Forty-seventh District.

This land is situated along the southern line of Madison County, adjoining St. Clair County, and contains in the neighborhood of two hundred acres. This is to be set aside as a State Park in the charge of the Illinois Park Commission, and to be known as ''Cahokia Mound-Builders' Park.''

The Cahokia Mound is the most ancient, most interesting and most wonderful of all. Such excavations as have been made in it, have revealed implements and utensils of vast antiquity. It is



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This mound has been preserved so far, through the efforts of the Ramey family, whose members have resisted overtures from land speculators, amusement park promoters and the like. To safeguard it for all time, however, only state care will suffice. Just as the Starved Rock reservation is now safely guaranteed in all its beauty for coming generations, so it is desired to save Monks Mound from commercialism or desecration. Will you help?

If you can take occasion to speak a word to your senator and representatives or drop them a letter, advocating the measure, it will impress the widespread interest that is being manifested. Public-spirited citizens in all quarters are uniting in this effort, and the association hopes that you will spare just a few moments time and a postage stamp to help boost this most commendable work.

The measure is now before the Legislature. Won't you please write at once, endorsing it.

Very Respectfully Yours,

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# Sketch by Brackenridge

*Written in 1811*

To form a more correct idea of these ruins, it will be necessary to give the reader some view of the tract of country in which they are situated. The American Bottom is a tract of rich alluvial land, extending on the Mississippi for about eighty miles (from Kaskaskia to Alton) in length and with an average of five in breadth; several handsome streams meander through it; the soil is of the richest kind, and but little subject to the effects of the Mississippi floods. A number of lakes are interspersed through it, with fine high banks; these abound in fish, and in autumn are visited by millions of wild fowl.

"There is no spot in the western country capable of being more highly cultivated, or of giving support to a numerous population, than this valley. If any vestige of ancient population were to be found, this would be the place to search for it; accordingly this tract, as also the tract on the western side (where is now the city of St. Louis), exhibits proof of an immense population. If the city of Philadelphia were deserted, there would not be more numerous traces of human existence.

"The great number of mounds, and the astonishing quantity of human bones dug up everywhere, or found on the surface of the ground, with a thousand other

appearances, announce that this valley was at one time filled with habitations and villages. The whole face of the bluff or hill which bounds it on the east appears to have been a continued burying ground. But the most remarkable appearance are the two groups of mounds or pyramids, the one about ten miles above Cahokia, the other nearly the same distance below it, which in all, exceed a hundred and fifty, of various sizes. The western side also contains a considerable number.

"A more minute description of those above Cahokia, which I visited in 1811, will give a tolerable idea of them all. I crossed the Mississippi at St. Louis, and after passing through the wood which borders the river, about half a mile in width, entered on an extensive plain. In fifteen minutes I found myself in the midst of a group of mounds, mostly of a circular shape, and, at a distance, resembling enormous haystacks scattered through a meadow. One of the largest, which I ascended, was about two hundred paces in circumference at the bottom. The form was nearly square, though it had evidently undergone some alteration from the washing of the rains; the top was level, with an area sufficient to contain several hundred men. The prospect from this mound was very beautiful,

looking toward the bluffs, which are dimly seen at a distance of six or eight miles, the bottom at this place being very wide. I had a level plain before me, bounded by islets of wood and a few solitary trees; to the right the prairie is bounded by the horizon; to the left, the course of the Cahokia river may be distinguished by the margin of wood upon its banks and crossing the valley diagonally S. S. W. Around me I counted forty-five mounds or pyramids, beside a great number of small artificial elevations. These mounds form something more than a semi-circle, a mile in extent, the open space on the river.

"Pursuing my walk along the bank of the Cahokia, I passed eight others in the distance of three miles, before I arrived at the largest assemblage. When I reached the foot of the principal mound, I was struck with a degree of astonishment not unlike that which is experienced in contemplating the Egyptian pyramids. What a stupendous pile of earth! To heap up such a mass must have required years, and the labor of thousands. It stands immediately on the bank of the Cahokia, and on the side next it is covered with lofty trees. Were it not for the regularity and design it manifests, the circumstance of it being on alluvial ground, and the other mounds scattered around it, we would scarcely believe it to be the work of human hands.

"The shape is that of a parallelogram, standing north and south. On the south side there is a broad apron or step, and from this another projection into

the plain, about fifteen feet wide, which was probably intended as an ascent to the mound. This step or terrace has been used for a kitchen-garden by some monks of La Trappe, settled near this, and the top of the structure is sown in wheat. Nearly west was another of smaller size, and forty others were scattered about on the plain. Two were seen on the bluff at a distance of three miles. Some of the mounds are almost conical; as the sward had been burned, the earth was perfectly naked and I could trace with ease any unevenness of the surface, so as to discover whether it was artificial or accidental.

"I everywhere observed a great number of small elevations of earth, to the height of a few feet, at regular distances from each other, and which appeared to observe some order; near them I also observed pieces of flint and fragments of earthen vessels. I concluded that a populous city had once existed here, similar to those of Mexico, described by the first conquerors. The mounds were sites of temples or monuments to great men."

The largest of the Cahokia group, thus described by Brackenridge, was occupied for a time by a colony of monks of the order of La Trappe, who devoted themselves to silence, seclusion and a strictly vegetable diet. They soon succumbed to the malarial influences of the climate. Some died, and the remaining ones returned whence they came. The great mound, among the early settlers at this time, was known as the Monks Mound. Subsequently, one of the white

settlers bought the land, and, thinking to be above the malaria, built a larger residence on top of the structure, and made the well spoken of on the second terrace. The mounds are now generally known as the Cahokia Mounds, from the name of the creek on which they are situated, as well as the name of a tribe of Indians found living on its banks on the advent of the whites.

As before remarked, we have surveyed this group, and find that the great pyramid is surrounded by seventy-two others of considerable size, within a distance of less than two miles from the great structure in the center. The group, however, continues down the Cahokia to the bank of the Mississippi, and was probably connected with those across the river, now the site of St. Louis. Besides the larger ones of which we speak, and of which there are considerably more than a hundred, there was, as Brackenridge remarks, a great number of smaller ones, some of which are now almost obliterated in the cultivated fields. Immediately about the great structure the mounds are of large size, and are nearer together. The majority of these are square, and still retain their proportions; their sides, in some instances, being too steep to admit of ploughing. These are from twenty to fifty feet in height, and are utilized by the owners of the land as building sites. Their size may be inferred from the fact that in several instances the farmer's residence, barns and all the outbuildings, together with the kitchen-garden, find ample room on the summits of some of these huge platforms and truncated pyramids.

A few of the mounds in this group are oval; but we have observed only one that is conical.

Earthen mounds are common in Egypt; and there is hardly a doubt that their great stone-faced pyramids, like those of Mexico, were erected for religious purposes, and used as tombs for the great on rare occasions. The Egyptians, like most of the nations of the old world, began with solar worship. So were the Mexicans, Peruvians, and our own Mound Builders, worshipers of the sun. After many days' explorations and study among the Cahokia mounds, we believe that the evidence tends to prove this group of the greatest mounds on this continent, and perhaps in the world, had its origin in religious purposes, and quite possibly this was the Mecca, or grand central shrine of the Mound Builders' empire. Upon the flat summit of the pyramid, one hundred feet above the plain, were their sanctuaries, probably two buildings like those of Mexico, glittering with barbaric splendor, and where could be seen from afar the smoke and flames of the eternal fire, their emblem of the sun. At the City of Mexico the Spaniards found the Aztecs holding their religious ceremonies on almost precisely such a structure, one hundred and twenty feet in height, with five terraces. On the flat summit of this pyramidal structure, which, like that of Cahokia, was divided into two parts, were two sanctuaries or shrines, in one of which the sacred fire burned. This great Mexican temple-mound was not, however, more than half the size of the Cahokia pyramid, being only three hundred feet

square at the base. The square mounds about the base of the principal structure at Cahokia, some of which are larger than the base of the Mexican temple, were doubtless used for sacred purposes; and the adjoining mounds may have been for residences for the priests; for just such places surrounded the Aztec temple.

"Surrounding the great pyramid," says Clavigero, speaking of the Aztec temple, "were forty similar structures of smaller size, consecrated to separate divinities; one was called the House of Mirrors, and was covered with glittering material, and was sacred to the god of light, the soul of the world, the spiritual sun; another to the god of water; another to the god of air;" and Gomera says that, "because the winds go round the heavens, they made this one circular."

Besides these were the dwellings of the priests, amounting to 5,000 according to Zarata, and of the attendants in the temple; also places for the instruction of the youth; and, if some are to be credited, places for the reception of strangers who came to visit the temple and see the glories of the court of Montezuma. "There were ponds and fountains, groves and gardens, in which flowers and sweet-smelling herbs were cultivated for use in the sacred rites and for the decoration of the temple."

This is what the cruel, merciless Spaniards saw; and it were pardonable if their accounts were in glowing colors. Yet there is a general concurrence in the accounts of these early writers, among whom were Cortez, Bernal Diaz and others who saw what they

describe. These accounts, which are in the main true, give us not only some idea of the predominance of religious superstitions in Mexico, but also a good clew to the customs of our own Mound Builders, and the origin and the use of the great structures on the Cahokia creek.

Adjoining the Cahokia pyramid on the southwest is a large pasture-field of a hundred acres or more, that the white settlers have never plowed or put in cultivation, from the fact of its being so covered with mounds and ponds. It can be very plainly seen that these ponds are artificial. One is circular, with a pretty circular island in its center; and as we look down upon it from a mound, we see again that ever-present eye of the manitou, that has glared at us from the bluffs, from the caverns, and which is so common on our ancient pottery—the oldest symbol in the world. Another pond is perfectly square, and the banks still so steep that the cattle reach the water only by indirect paths worn in the sides of the bank. In the driest seasons the water in the pond is several feet in depth, and contains a great many fishes. Curious to know if there was anything peculiar about them, we caught a number to add to our dinner. They were the little sunfishes so common in the Cahokia and the lakes of this region. What further interested us was a number of square earthen platforms arranged about the pond. These platforms were perhaps a hundred feet long and two or three feet in height. Although covered in places by a thick growth of bushes, their

form could be easily seen. Brackenridge speaks of these in 1811, when, the grass of the prairie having been burned, he could see them plainly, and thought there was design in their arrangement. We think they may be the remains of gardens about the fish ponds, similar to those which the Spaniards saw about the great Aztec temple of Mexico.

The longest axis of the great Cahokia pyramid is nine hundred and ninety-eight feet; the shortest, seven hundred and twenty-one feet, and it covers sixteen acres, two roods and three perches of ground. The great pyramid of Cheops, in Egypt, is seven hundred and forty-six feet square. The Aztec temple-mound of Mexico was six hundred and eighty feet square. While the Cahokia pyramid is of much the same shape as the great temple-mound, and as those of Egypt, it is very much larger, and the surrounding mounds much larger and greater in number. We are led to believe that here on the bank of the Cahokia, in the center of our Union, was the greatest congregation of religious structures ever known, not merely on this continent, but in the world.

What a city! What a population there must have been at that time on this favored spot! This view is also strongly evidenced by the fact that this rich plain, more than seventy-five miles long, and five to twelve miles wide, is, as Brackenridge remarked three-quarters of a century ago, "a veritable cemetery of the past, and full of the proofs of long occupation." Relics of the stone age protrude from the banks of every creek and

ravine. In the rich fields opposite St. Louis, and for miles up the Cahokia creek, we have seen the market gardener literally plow through human bones. The little labor with which enormous crops are grown here would excite envy of the plodding planter on the banks of the Nile, patiently waiting for the sometimes tardy flood.

Some eminently traveled writer, after admitting that Nature stands revealed on a grand scale in America, complains that this new world is wanting in antiquities like those so full of interest in the old. This writer ought to come to Cahokia, and standing on our Cheops, whose base covers more ground than any in Egypt, look down on the monuments of pre-historic America. When he asks who built them, the echoes of his inquiring voice may go reverberating among the temples below, but the answer will not return, for no one knows. The dead past has indeed buried its dead.

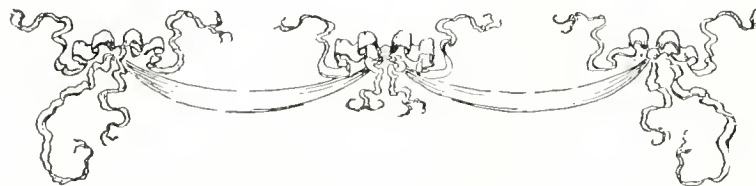
There is hardly an antiquity in any country that is not represented here, and it is the remarkable similarity of some of the more peculiar that puzzles us. We have been in the habit of attributing these evidences of similarity of thought to the instinctive impulses of savage and untutored minds. We might as well say here, however, that we now believe this will hold good only to a very limited extent. We say we are sometimes puzzled, because we may not always be sufficiently acquainted with the points of our analogies to know if the parallelism is true. This is illustrated in

the fact that having taken from one of these Cahokia mounds a number of large sea-shells, found in such position and under such circumstances as to leave hardly a doubt in our mind that they were held sacred by the Mound Builders, and used in their religious ceremonies, we were told by an intelligent and educated gentleman, who had spent several years in India in the employ of the British government, that these were held sacred by the Buddhists, because they were sinistral, or reversed. We are told that statues of Buddha are often seen in which the toes of his feet are represented by reversed shells, and that, from time immemorial, these shells, turning the wrong way, have been reversed in Asia and wherever the Buddhist religion is known. It is at least singular that we have taken from our mounds so many sea shells, not only pyrula, but large cassis and others, with the peculiarity of their whorls reversed.

It is also a singular fact—at least we have read it as such—that the great pyramids of Cahokia, like those

of Egypt and Mexico, should stand straight with the main points of the compass. We know that those of Cahokia stand thus. If this is true of the others, here is one of the many strong points that would seem to prove that our later Indians are not descended from the Mound Builders. No matter what else the Indians may have forgotten, or what of history may have passed from them, they certainly would have retained, if once they had known, the points of the compass. Had their ancestors known the North Star, they would know it today. We have no information tending to show that our Indians had any knowledge of this kind. In the daytime they could travel by the sun, but at night the sky was a blank to them, and they had no knowledge of the stars. A sure guide in the heavens at night would have been such an invaluable acquisition to the Indian in the wilderness, that it would be indeed strange if, having once possessed it, it should have passed entirely from his remembrance.

H. M. BRACKENRIDGE.



# Edmund Flagg

*Extract from his book, "The Far West," published in 1838*

After a delightful drive the second group of eminences, known as the "Cahokia Mounds," appeared upon the prairie at a distance of three or four miles, the celebrated "Monks Mound," largest monument of the kind yet discovered in North America, heaving up its giant, forest-clothed form in the midst. What are the reflections to which this stupendous earth-heap gives birth? What the associations which throng the excited fancy! What a field for conjecture! What a boundless range for the workings of imagination! What eye can view this venerable monument of the past, this mighty landmark in the lapse of ages, this gray chronicler of hoary centuries, and turn away uninterested?

As it is first beheld, surrounded by the lesser heaps, it is mistaken by the traveler for an elevation of natural origin; as he draws nigh, and at length stands at the base, its stupendous magnitude, its lofty summit, towering above his head and throwing its broad shadow far across the meadow; its slopes, ploughed with yawning ravines by the torrents of centuries descending to the plain; its surface and declivities perforated by the habitations of burrowing animals, and carpeted with tangled thickets, the vast size of the aged oaks rearing themselves from its soil; and finally, the farmhouse, with its various structures, its garden, and orchard, and

well, rising upon the broad area of the summit, and the carriage pathway winding up from the base, all confirm his impression that no hand but that of the Mightiest could have reared the enormous mass. At that moment, should he be assured that this vast earth-heap was of origin demonstrably artificial, he would smile; but credulity the most sanguine would fail to credit the assertion. But, when, with jealous eye, slowly and cautiously, and with measured footsteps, he has circled its base; when he has surveyed its slopes and declivities from every position, and has remarked the peculiar uniformity of its structure and the mathematical exactitude of its outline; when he has ascended to its summit, and looked round upon the piles of a similar character by which it is surrounded; when he has taken into consideration its situation upon a river-bottom of nature decidedly alluvial, and, of consequence, utterly incompatible with the natural origin of such elevations; when he has examined the soil of which it is composed, and has discovered it to be uniformly, throughout the entire mass, of the same mellow and friable species as that of the prairie at its base; and when he has listened with scrutiny to the facts which an examination of its depths has thrown to light of its nature and its contents, he is compelled, however

reluctantly, yet without a doubt, to declare that the gigantic pile is incontestibly the workmanship of man's hand. But, with such an admission, what is the crowd of reflections which throng and startle the mind? What a series of unanswerable inquiries succeed! When was this stupendous earth-heap reared up from the plain? By what race of beings was the vast undertaking accomplished? What was its purpose? What changes in its form and magnitude have taken place? What vicissitudes and revolutions have, in the lapse of centuries, rolled like successive waves over the plains at its base? As we reflect, we anxiously look around us for some tradition, some time-stained chronicle, some age-worn record, even the faintest and most unsatisfactory legend, upon which to repose our credulity, and relieve the inquiring solicitude of the mind. But our research is hopeless. The present race of aborigines can tell nothing of these tumuli. To them, as to us, they are veiled in mystery. Ages since, long ere the white-face came, while this fair land was yet the home of his fathers, the simple Indian stood before this venerable earth-heap, and gazed, and wondered, and turned away.

But there is another reflection, which as we gaze upon these venerable tombs, addresses itself directly to our feelings, and bows them in humbleness. It is, that soon our memory and that of our own generation will, like that of other times and other men, have passed away; that when these frail tenements shall have been laid aside to moulder, the remembrance will

soon follow them to the land of forgetfulness. Ah, if there be an object in all the wide universe of human desires for which the heart of man yearns with an intensity of craving more agonizing and deathless than for any other, it is that the memory should live after the poor body is dust. It was this eternal principle of our nature which reared the lonely tombs of Egypt amid the sands and barrenness of the desert. For ages untold have the massive and gloomy pyramids looked down upon the floods of the Nile, and generation after generation has passed away; yet their very existence still remains a mystery, and their origin points down our inquiry far beyond the grasp of human ken, into the boiling mists, the "wide involving shades" of centuries past. And yet how fondly did they who, with the toil, and blood, and sweat, and misery of ages, upreared these stupendous piles, anticipate an immortality for their name which, like the effulgence of a golden eternity, should forever linger around their sunmits! So was it with the ancient tomb builders of this New World; so has it been with man in every stage of his existence, from the hour that the giant Babel first reared its dusky walls from the plains of Shinar down to the era of the present generation. And yet how hopeless, desperately, eternally hopeless are such aspirations of the children of men! As nations or as individuals, our memory we can never embalm. A few, indeed, may retain the forlorn relic within the sanctuary of hearts which loved us while with them, and that with a tenderness stronger than death; but,

with the great mass of mankind, our absence can be noticed only for a day; and then the ranks close up, and a gravestone tells the passing stranger that we lived and died; a few years—the finger of time has been busy with the inscription, and we are as if we had never been. If, then, it must be even so.

“Oh, let us keep the soul embalm’d and pure  
In living virtue; that, when both must sever,  
Although corruption may our frame consume,  
Th’ immortal spirit in the skies may bloom.”

EDMUND FLAGG.

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## A. J. Conant

Member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science

*Extract from his book, "Foot-Prints of Vanished Races," 1879*

The Temple Mounds of America are invested with an interest and importance outside of their purely religious character; and which is greatly enhanced by the fact that wherever they are found, along with them invariably occur the most striking evidences of the former presence of a numerous population; whose government was so well established and enduring as to render it possible for vast numbers to be employed for a series of years in their erection.

The stupendous Mound of Cahokia in Illinois, with its graded way, its terrace and level summit, is the best representative of the Temple Mounds.

What a graceful thing it would be for the State or National Government to purchase it and decree its perpetual preservation! Men of science all over the world and in all future time would be so thankful for such an act.

A. J. CONANT.



# Brief Sketch of Cahokia or Monks Mound

*By Wm. McAdams, A. D. 1887*

However satisfactory the history of symbolism in Europe and Asia may be, yet to the student of archaeology it may fail to account for the presence of these symbols on this continent. We are constantly puzzled by these analogies, although they serve to make us more observing in our researches.

Like Schliemann, we commence digging again; and it is to be noted how strangely similar are the results of one of these days of labor, notwithstanding the distance that intervenes. Schliemann is digging in a mound in full view of the Hellespont and the Aegean Sea, under the official eye of a Turk. We are digging in a mound on the banks of the Mississippi, on another continent, until a comparatively recent date unknown. When discovered by Columbus it was inhabited by a race of people without any history; in the Valley of the Mississippi these people were living on the ruins of still another people, of whom they had no knowledge whatever. For it is an established fact that our American Indians have no knowledge of their own origin, nor of the fate of the Mound Builders who preceded them. We know that a strong effort has been made, worthy a better cause, to establish the fact that our American Indians are descendants of the Mound Builders. But even if this were proven, which we are

loth to believe, we do not see how it affects our American archaeology. We still have the same question, Who were the Mound Builders?

The later Indians, when discovered by Columbus, were called savages, because they had none of the arts and were almost, if not quite, without an established government or religion. That the Mound Builders were a superior people we think is clearly proven in the remains of their extensive earthworks, which quite clearly indicate an established government and a religion. Also, from evidences before us, we believe they had some knowledge of their own origin and history. It is indeed singular that the Indians of this country should have no knowledge whatever of the fate of the Mound Builders, especially so if the latter were their forefathers.

Schliemann, in his trenches on the mound of Hisarlik, is searching for the tombs of the heroes of Troy. Their story has been told by a historian whose soul was inspired with the harmony of the poet; and who, almost as proud of his powers of description as he was of his heroes and heroines, passed them in procession back and forth before us, as though he would have us know each one personally. No heroes, perhaps, in all the world are better known than Priam and his valiant

sons, and those with whom they fought on the Trojan plain three thousand years ago.

In our trenches in the mounds on the bank of our great river, we are simply searching for a bit of history. Our heroes have no name. The Mound Builder Kings, if such there were, have gone down into the tomb enveloped in the silence of oblivion. A dead nation without a history. No, not wholly without a history, because here are his weapons and implements of stone; his agricultural implements and a great number of tools, all of stone; these tell us he lived in the stone age. There are pieces of iron ore, and some of lead, but he did not even know how to melt the lead ore, but used it as a stone. The only metal he knows is the soft native copper, which he pounds into shape for a weapon or an ornament. There are beautiful sea shells, mica from the far eastern mountains, obsidian from the distant regions in the West; so that we know he had quite an extensive acquaintance; probably traveled far up and down the river, and had a sort of commerce. Is that all?

No! There are some pretty sculptured stone objects that we are satisfied are sacred and devoted to his religion; and, last but not least, there are the beautiful burial vases of tempered clay, that bear the most vivid and artistic devices; which have such a familiar look, that, without reflecting, in our ecstasy we exclaim: "Why, we know him!" Before we knew his family we had nearly claimed him kinsman, because our forefather, we know, in the past, was girt with skins,

and carried a stone axe for a weapon, though he afterward wore a helmet and strode over the field before Ilium, and maybe he had a tilt with some of Priam's sons, in the gloaming, thirty centuries ago.

All over the world primitive men have made earthen mounds over their dead; and Homer, describing the burning of the body of Hector and the building of a great mound over the ashes, describes just what was practiced by our American Mound Builders. Many of the customs of the Mound Builders were similar to those of the Greeks, and which are traced through them back to the Egyptians. One usually recognizes an Egyptian landscape by seeing in the background a pyramid; and Egypt and the pyramid seem to be inseparable. Yet America has many pyramids. They are common in Mexico, and some of them rival in size those of Egypt. They are also found in Central and South America, and some of these are faced with stone and have all the peculiarities of the Egyptian structures, even to the singular openings to chambers within.

There are many pyramids in the United States, regular, perfect pyramids of earth, and not faced with stone. One of the largest of these is situated on the level plain of that rich piece of lowland bordering the Mississippi opposite the city of St. Louis, and known as the American Bottom. In the midst of this plain, where its width is ten to twelve miles, there are still to be seen the remains of a Mound Builders' city, that

in the majesty and extent of its ruins will vie with any in the world. In the center of a great mass of mounds and earthworks there stands a mighty pyramid, whose base covers nearly sixteen acres of ground. It is not exactly square, being a parallelogram, a little longer north and south than east and west. Some thirty feet above the base, on the south side, is an apron or terrace, on which now grows an orchard of considerable size. This terrace is approached from the plain by a graded roadway. Thirty feet above this terrace, and on the west side, is another, much smaller, and on which are now growing some forest trees. The top, which contains an acre and a half, is divided into two nearly equal parts, the northern part being four or

five feet the highest. The height of this structure is about one hundred feet, from actual measurements. On the north, east and south the structure still retains its straight side, that probably has changed but little since the settlement of the country by white men, but remains in appearance today the same as centuries ago. The west side of the pyramid, however, has its base somewhat serrated and seamed by ravines, evidently made by rain storms and the elements. From the second terrace a well, eighty feet in depth, penetrates the base of the structure, which is plainly seen to be almost wholly composed of the black, sticky soil of the surrounding plain. It is not an oval, or conical mound or hill, but a pyramid with straight sides.

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## E. O. Randall

Secretary of the Ohio State Archaeological Society

*From introduction of his book, "Ohio Mound Builders," 1908*

### CAHOKIA MOUND.

During a sojourn in that fairyland of modern marvels, the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, held at St. Louis, in the summer of 1904, it was the privilege of the writer, in company with a party including several students of American archaeology, to make an inspec-

tion of the world-famed Cahokia Mound. We crossed the sweeping Mississippi to the Illinois side, over the colossal bridge, one of the engineering achievements of modern invention and skill, which, had it existed in the ancient days of Oriental glory, would have been regarded, if not the first, then easily the eighth wonder

of the world. A swift-speeding trolley car landed us almost at the base of the great mound, called respectively "Cahokia Mound," from the Indian tribe which formerly inhabited the locality, and the "Monks Mound," from the fact that in the year 1810 a colony of Trappists settled thereabouts and occupied a monastic building, which they erected on the summit of the mound. After only a few years' sojourn, the solitude-seeking religionists returned to France. But little evidence remains of their occupancy.

The Mound Builders never failed to exercise sagacious judgment in their choice of sites for habitation or the erection of their chief structures. No better place could have been found for the Cahokia and its surrounding mounds than in the upper Mississippi Valley near the juncture of the Missouri from the west and the Illinois from the northeast, a strategetical point on the main waterways of the vast Northwest. For many miles below the mouth of the Missouri, the east side of the Mississippi broadens into a plain some eight or ten miles in width, interrupted by a line of bluffs which form its eastern boundary. This stretch of level surface, composed of rich, fertile, alluvial deposit, is known as the "American Bottom." Several creeks cross it from its eastern limit to the Mississippi and many little lakes formerly dotted the thick growths of timber and prolific underbrush that in the early days must have clothed it. This was a prime hunting territory for fish, fowl and game, well adapted to the primitive life of a prehistoric people. Near the center

of this bottom and just south of its chief stream, the Cahokia stands today, as it has stood for untold centuries, the most massive and imposing monument of the Mound Builders in this country and probably in the world. Surrounding this mound, within a radius of two or three miles, in a more or less perfect state of preservation, in varying shapes and sizes, from ten to sixty feet in height, are some fifty lesser mounds. At still greater distances from the center structure, in groups or isolated examples, are many more. Great numbers have been obliterated. Doubtless in the days of the "Golden Era" of the Mound Builder, hundreds of mounds dotted the American Bottom. Scores of these strange earth-heaps originally occupied the site of St. Louis and were demolished to make way for the lengthening streets and spreading squares of that metropolis. On these banks of the mighty river must have been a vast population whose labors were almost incredible in their results as evidenced by the relics still extant.

Cahokia Mound is a truncated rectangular pyramid, rising to a height of one hundred feet above the original surface upon which it was built. The dimensions of its base are from north to south one thousand and eighty feet; from east to west, seven hundred and ten feet. The area of the base is therefore something over sixteen acres. This is a greater area than the base of the Pyramid of Cheops—the greatest of the Egyptian tombs. The size may be better understood when compared with the State House square in Columbus, which

measuring from fence to fence, is ten acres in space; taking in the width of the four surrounding streets gives nearly the area of the great mound. The mound was originally a curious series of receding terraces, four in number. The lowest terrace extends five hundred feet from east to west and two hundred feet from north to south. From the south face of that terrace, a point having the appearance of a graded approach, prospects due south from a distance of about eighty feet. The second terrace is at the present time badly gutted and worn away, which makes it difficult to ascertain the exact size or elevation. The next terrace has an elevation of ninety-seven feet above the original mound base surface. Near the center of this terrace there formerly stood a small conical mound, long since destroyed. The fourth terrace is now the most elevated platform of the mound. Its greatest height is one hundred feet above the plain or three feet above the third terrace; it was probably higher in its pristine condition. The area of this summit terrace is about two hundred feet by one hundred and sixty feet. On the left of the mound, leading from the base to the summit, is a modern pathway for easy ascent. The contents of this mound have been estimated to considerably exceed one million cubic yards of earth; and the labor of loading and unloading this material or carrying it from a likely distance would occupy twenty-five hundred men two years, working every day in the year. There is little dispute among scientists concerning the conclusion that this is an

artificial mound. Those who have made geological demonstrations and archaeological explorations have generally agreed that this enormous pile of earth was built by a primitive and prehistoric people and, so far as any evidence can be shown built by hands with implements of the crudest and most primitive character. There are, however, notable exceptions to this agreement. Professor Daniel G. Brinton, formerly of the Pennsylvania University and one of the most distinguished Americanists of this country, says: "It is doubtful whether this (mound) is wholly an artificial construction," and he cites Professor Spencer Smith as saying it is "largely a natural formation." There are always skeptics no matter how overwhelming the proof.

This truncated, terraced form of mound had its analogy in many of the temples of Mexico and Central America, and indeed in many of the early works of Oriental nations. Such is the monarch, man-made mountain as it was raised above the plain in the midst of this Mound Builders' country.

The first view, to the archaeological student, is apt to be dispelling of a preconceived idea, which is usually that of the mound in its architectural prime. Its original clear-cut lines and arithmetical proportions are blunted by the wear of age. Deep furrows have marred its sides and wrinkled its front. Though resisting valiantly, it has bowed to the storms of nature and the vandal assaults of civilized man.

We climbed the jagged flank to the summit and stood upon the elevation that lifted us above the surrounding plain. It was an amiable afternoon in September; the sun had crossed the Mississippi and, well on his way to the western horizon, cast a mellow tone over the landscape that lay before us. The broad valley gave us a peaceful and pleasing view—stretching to the east till cut off by the dim outline of the uplands; to the west to the great "Father of Waters," which, like an irresistible flood, plowed its way to the Mexican Gulf. Round about on every hand, like contrasting features of a race vanished and forgotten and a people now world predominant, were interspersed the weather-beaten and depleted mounds and the prosperous farm homes. In many instances these homes were built on the mounds, typifying the conquest of civilization over savagery, the inevitable survival of the fittest. It was a scene for the historian and the philosopher, the artist and the poet. As one writer observes: "There was a double presence which was forced upon the mind—the presence of those who since the beginning of historic times have visited the region and gazed upon this very monument and written descriptions of it, one after the other, until a volume of literature has accumulated; and the presence of those who in prehistoric times filled the valley with their works, but were unable to make any record of themselves except such as is contained in these silent witnesses." Here certainly was one of the great centers, if not the chief center, in the western continent of

this mysterious people. Many writers and students conclude that if the Mound Builders of the territory now embraced in the United States had a central government, it must from all evidences have been located here in the American Bottom of the Mississippi Valley. Here in greatest number were found their largest monuments, which bear testimony to their patience and industry and long sojourn. In the mounds and in the intervening fields were found astonishing quantities of human bones, and crude stone implements of war and of domestic life, simple but eloquent witnesses of the most primitive stage of human progress. No copper or iron artifacts were found. These people had never emerged from the age of stone—the rocky road of life.

And was this gigantic earthen structure their temple, their religious tabernacle, the "great central shrine of the Mound Builders' empire," "upon which," suggests one writer and distinguished scholar, "one hundred feet above the plain, were their sanctuaries, glittering with barbaric splendor and where could be seen from afar the smoke and flames of the eternal fire, their emblem of the sun."

"This mound stands," writes Professor Stephen D. Peet, "like a solemn monarch; lonely in its grandeur, but imposing in its presence. Though many trains go rumbling across the valley and through the great bridge which spans the river, yet this monster stands as a mute witness of a people which has passed away. It is a silent statue, a sphinx, which still keeps within

its depths the mystery which no one has yet fathomed. It perpetuates the riddle of the sphinx."

Was it some mighty tomb erected to be the fitting mausoleum of a great conqueror or chief—some terrible Attila, or invincible Alaric, a Caesar or Napoleon of savage days? Small wonder that the scene presented from that Cahokia summit awakened one's curiosity and stirred one's imagination. Marvelous relic—preservation of a prehistoric people looming like the dome of a cathedral from the level valley—the arena in which a vast race had lived and toiled, had come, seen and perhaps had conquered, achieved their ambitions and proudly expended their energies. A race of mystery, whence and when it came, whither or when it went, no man knoweth unto this day. All is locked in impenetrable secrecy. As my companions were discussing the unsolved riddle of the past, there came to our memory Volney's *Meditations on the "Ruins of Empires;"* seated amid the demolished architectural splendors of Palmyra in the Syrian plain of the historic Euphrates, there passed before his "mind's eye" the representatives of buried dynasties and dead faiths. What a chance was here at Cahokia for some historico-philosophic dreamer "to interrogate ancient monuments on the wisdom of past times." Surely here were the remains of a vast and vanished empire. In this valley of the Mississippi had flourished, who knows how long ago, a mighty nation; they had builded better than they knew, for their simple and stupendous struc-

tures had survived "the tooth of time and razure of oblivion."

The Mound Builder had certainly founded his kingdom; it had flourished, for he had erected imperishable and inscrutable memorials; imposing structures that survived ages and races. Could some wizard's wand recall the procession of the people who had made their entrees and their exits in this Mississippi Valley, what a varied and graphic panorama would be founded! The Mound Builders had dwelt here in great numbers and power for generations, only to join "the innumerable caravan that moves to that mysterious realm" which is the destiny of races as of men; then came at least one other savage successor, the child of the forest, the Indian; bitter and bloody was the struggle of his stay, but his happy hunting grounds were to be the dwelling place of the pale face. Yes, even the white intruder, the European usurper, had made this American Bottom memorable; it had been the field of the national contest for supremacy in the western world; in turn the Spaniard, the Frenchman, the Briton and the American had struggled for this winning of the west; here DeSoto and his gaily attired cavaliers had planted the flag of Castile and Aragon; here the Jesuit priest and the adventurous courier De Bois had sought favor with the redmen and claimed the basin of the Mississippi for La Belle of France; here the insatiable Anglo-Saxon had supplanted the banner of the Bourbons with the standard of St. George and the Dragon; and here

that patriotic and dauntless "Washington of the West," Colonel George Rogers Clark, and his heroic little band of Virginia riflemen, had carried in triumph the Stars and Stripes and saved the Northwest Territory to the infant republic; and now "last scene of all that ends this strange eventful history," the peaceful homes of the American citizen crown the summits of the temples of the Mound Builders. Is this the final chapter or are others to be written? Macaulay, in his famous prophecy, wrote: "She (Rome) saw the commencement of all the governments and of all the ecclesiastical establishments that now exist in the world; and we feel no assurance that she is not destined to see the end of them all. She was great and respected before the Saxon had set foot on Britain—before the French had passed the Rhine—when Grecian eloquence still flourished at Antioch—when idols were still worshiped in the temple of Mecca. And she may still exist in undiminished vigor when some traveler from New

Zealand shall, in the midst of a vast solitude, take his stand on a broken arch of London Bridge to sketch the ruins of St. Paul."

So the Mound Builder was here before European civilization found its foothold on the western continent, and his relics have survived centuries of civilized conflict; perhaps a cycle hence some representative of another race yet unborn, the ultimate racial composite man, may stand upon the summit of Cahokia and as he wonders over its age and origin may look about him and witness the ruins of an antique American Republic while he recalls the poet's summary:

"There is the moral of all human tales;

'Tis but the same rehearsal of the past.

First freedom, and then glory—when that falls,

Wealth, vice, corruption—barbarian at last,

And history, with all its volumes vast,

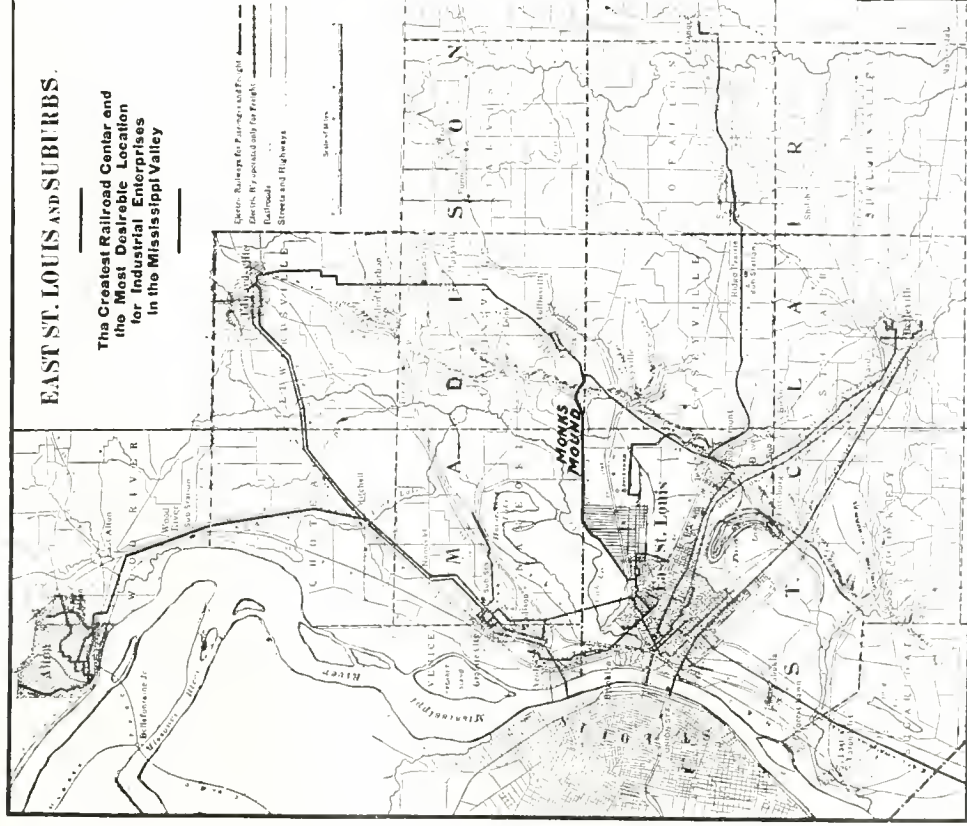
Hath but one page."

E. O. RANDALL.



## EAST ST. LOUIS AND SUBURBS.

The Greatest Railroad Center and  
the Most Desirable Location  
for Industrial Enterprises  
in the Mississippi Valley



N. W. O'Neil, S. J., Archivist of Missouri Province, S. J., says:

"This measure seems to me highly commendable from an historical and educational standpoint, and its adoption would, I am assured, be hailed with satisfaction by every friend of education."

♦ ♦ ♦

F. W. Shipley, Acting President The Archaeological Institute of America, Washington University, St. Louis, Mo., says:

"I am exceedingly glad to learn that a bill is being brought before the legislature of the State of Illinois recommending the conversion of the Cahokia Mound into a State Park. The mound is one of the greatest prehistoric monuments in the United States and should be taken over by the State as the only sure way of preserving it from exploitation by private individuals. I take great pleasure in endorsing the bill, both personally and on behalf of the organization which I represent."

♦ ♦ ♦

Charles P. Pettus, Secretary Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, Mo., says:

"Whereas, The Missouri Historical Society of St. Louis has for many years deeply appreciated the great historic value of the Cahokia and adjacent Indian mounds, and have seen with regret the destruction of some of these prehistoric monuments, and that it is

the judgment of this society that to preserve them from injury, the entire group should be under State or Government control."

♦ ♦ ♦

Mr. John C. Burke, Librarian St. Louis University, St. Louis, Mo., says:

"On historical and educational grounds I know of no more praiseworthy measure than this proposition to preserve for all time these monuments of pre-Columbian races. The passing of this bill will bring both honor to the State of Illinois and keen satisfaction to all promoters of science and education."

♦ ♦ ♦

Edmund A. Engler, President The Academy of Science, 3817 Olive Street, St. Louis, says:

"The Academy of Science of St. Louis has for more than half a century appreciated the historic value of the Cahokia and surrounding Indian mounds. We have watched the destruction of one after another of the mounds and realized that the entire group should be under State or Government control."

♦ ♦ ♦

Mr. George S. Mephan, corner Twentieth and Lynch Avenue, East St. Louis, Ill., says:

"I have had an opportunity of showing this mound to several scientific gentlemen from Europe who are very familiar with Egypt and its achaeology. Their universal expression was that something should be

done, and quickly, to preserve this mound before its shape shall have been lost and perhaps its very existence destroyed, and a surprise that the authorities had not taken means to preserve so interesting a relic of a civilization which, no doubt, occupied this territory thousands of years ago."

♦ ♦ ♦

Mr. Philip Hinkle, Curator Department of American Archaeology, Cincinnati, Museum Association, says:

"The preservation of these ancient monuments for posterity is of the greatest importance, and unfortunately they are being destroyed at a rapid rate. The Cahokia Mound is one of the wonders of the world in the belief of many, and it would be almost a crime to neglect an opportunity to preserve it forever. Ohio has parked her Fort Ancient and her Serpent Mound, and Cahokia is just as well known the world over. Men and women come from all over the country to see the Serpent and Fort Ancient and they also come to Cahokia. Interest in the mounds is not centered in a few, but in tens of thousands, and anything that can be done to preserve the mounds should be done."

♦ ♦ ♦

Olive C. Gatlin, Corresponding Secretary, says:

"We realize the historic value of these monuments and regret that the park was not established before so many of the surrounding mounds were destroyed."

Mr. H. A. Meyer, Greenville, Ill., says:

"I heartily endorse such a plan and hope that this bill will become a law."

♦ ♦ ♦

Dr. O. L. Schmidt, Schiller Building, Chicago, says:

"I heartily approve of the bill, as I think it contains all the points, and if passed will mean a direct and immediate effort for securing the mound. It will direct and strengthen the action of the State Park Commission in a way that is essential, if the report is true and they had decided to drop the mound question on account of its expensiveness."

♦ ♦ ♦

Mr. Wm. C. Mills, Curator and Librarian, the Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio, says:

"I became interested in the Cahokia Mound during the World's Fair in St. Louis, and had several occasions to visit the mound with representatives from various parts of the world, and on one occasion I took a party of scientists numbering more than forty, and in a short address I gave them at the mound I urged upon the State of Illinois to take steps to secure this wonderful monument and preserve it for all time. I explained that, in Ohio, where we have a great many interesting mounds, we had none so fine and beautiful as Cahokia Mound, yet we have taken steps to preserve them in their original form. Ohio has been, and is still, purchasing them. At present we have Fort

Ancient, comprising some three hundred acres, made into a beautiful park; Serpent Mound, of over seventy acres, kept likewise; Big Bottom Park is another one of our possessions."

♦ ♦ ♦

President Christian Brothers' College, St. Louis, Mo., says:

"Your petitioners, members of the State Historical Society, and others, most respectfully request your support of House Bill No. 179, introduced March 12, 1913, by Norman G. Flagg, of Madison County.

"Said bill empowers the Illinois Park Commission to negotiate for the purchase by the State of the renowned Cahokia, or Monks Mound, property, in Madison County, and its conversion into a State Park, or reservation, and making an appropriation therefor.

"This mound and the adjacent tumuli, are the most notable relics in the Mississippi Valley of the prehistoric race denominated the "Mound Builders." These relics of a vanished people we regard as entitled to protection from vandalism, and worthy of permanent preservation.

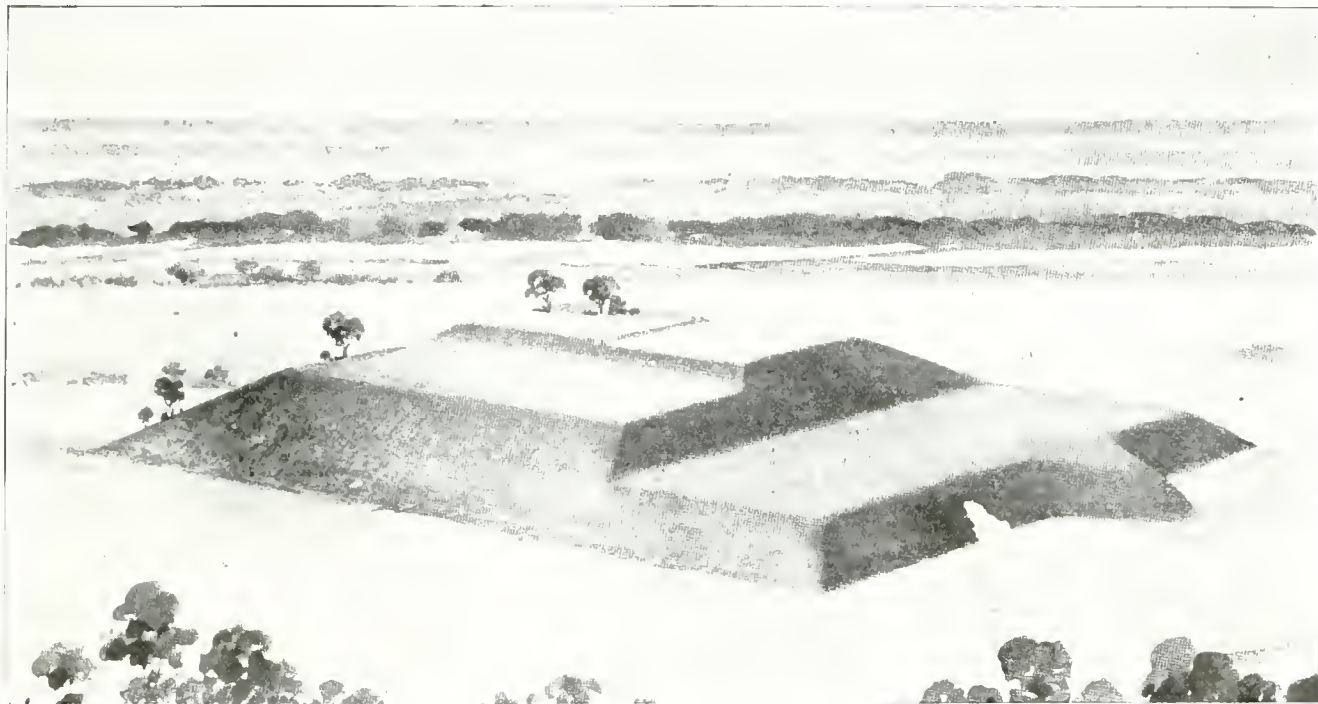
"Your petitioners most respectfully pray your favorable consideration of this bill."

♦ ♦ ♦

Mr. Gerard Fowke, says:

"I am positive that I voice the sentiment of all students of archaeology and history when I say that

no bill has ever been presented to your Assembly which will be more cordially endorsed by all who have a scientific interest in the advancement of science or the preservation of our beauties and wonders. Cahokia Mound is the most stupendous pile ever erected by human hands solely as a monument or temple site. The countries of Europe willingly expend large sums to preserve ruins or remains which would scarcely be noticeable if placed near Cahokia. We have here the culmination of the efforts of the Mound Builders; it is among their works what the most magnificent cathedral is among our own buildings. More and more the spirit of sentiment and appreciation is coming to recognize the historic value of such things. Great sums are devoted to excavations in Greece, Egypt, Asia Minor, Italy, and other countries; far more than would be necessary for the purchase and restoration of all the large mounds in the American Bottom. Cahokia should never be disturbed by the pick or shovel; but it should have the earth that has settled to its base restored to its place, that the pile may be as the Mound Builders left it. The same spirit calls for the preservation of Cahokia which has led to the reservation of Niagara, Yellowstone Park, etc. These are natural creations; but Cahokia connects us directly with the vanished people of whose district and faith we are ignorant."



He get a hearing before the Appropriation  
Committee. This bill Thursday, May!.,

Will you please give it your support and  
influence in any<sup>&</sup>all ways that you can?

I am sure you understand the merits of  
the bill and ask you to act immediately.

Respectfully,

Cahokia Mound Pres. Com.